

Prevention

Partners

Avenues

Welcome to
Avenues !

Welcome back! Our first issue for the new millenium focuses on women's health, specifically heart health.

In this issue, we'll discuss the precautions women can take to decrease their risk for the deadly disease.

Worksite screenings are a great way to detect problems that could lead to heart disease. Call your benefits administrator or Prevention Partners coordinator to participate in the upcoming screenings.

Avenues is published by the Prevention Partners unit of the South Carolina Budget and Control Board's Office of Insurance Services.

We hope you find it enjoyable and informative.

The Inside

Winter 2000
Volume 3, Issue 2

Reverse Heart Disease
Cholesterol Page 2
Stroke Risk Factors Page 3
Awards for Excellence
Order Form Page 4

Women and heart disease

Breast cancer is a major health issue for women. Yet there is something else that is far more prevalent in women and gets much less attention - heart disease.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for women, claiming more than 200,000 lives a year, six times the number of women who die from breast cancer.

One of the main reasons so many women die from heart disease is that they don't always recognize the risk factors. Risk factors are different for men and women. But those differences aren't recognized by many people, including physicians. A Gallup survey in 1996 found that nearly two-thirds of the nation's primary care physicians reported "no difference" in the symptoms, warning signs and diagnosis of heart disease in women, compared to men. Another survey showed that 70 percent of women think the symptoms are the same for both sexes.

But we know there is a difference. And for a number of reasons.

The major risk factors for heart disease are smoking, high blood pressure, diabetes, lack of exercise and high cholesterol. These are true for both men and women. However, these risk factors operate differently depending on gender.

Women who smoke are as much as six times more likely to have a heart attack than nonsmoking women. Smoking poses a greater risk of heart disease for women than it does for men, according to the American Heart Association.

Cholesterol readings among men and women also require a different interpretation. High density lipoprotein (HDL or the "good" cholesterol) accounts for a greater fraction of total cholesterol in women as opposed to men. Therefore, it is important for women to have their HDL levels checked before a total cholesterol reading is interpreted as being too high. In other words, while a woman's total cholesterol may be as high as a man's, she most likely has a higher HDL/LDL ratio and therefore may be at lower risk than her male counterpart.

Diabetes is obviously a significant risk factor for coronary heart disease (CHD) in both men and women. A study published in January by the American Medical Association reminds us of that. Other studies have shown that at the same level of glucose intolerance, women have about twice the heart disease risk of men.

Even the diagnosis of heart disease in women can be difficult. The electrocardiogram (EKG) isn't as useful in women because of the interference of



Women and heart disease
Continued on Page 3

Reverse heart disease with food

Can you eat your way out of heart disease? Yes, you can.

The best known program is authored by Dr. Dean Ornish of the Preventive Medicine Research Institute. One of the five major components of the Dr. Ornish program is an ultra-low-fat diet. While most experts think 30 percent fat consumption is perfectly safe, Dr. Ornish calls for just 10 percent.

Evidence backs Dr. Ornish's claims. A five year study released in 1998 showed that those who followed the Ornish program had an 8 percent reduction in atherosclerosis plaques while those who didn't follow it had a 28 percent increase. Atherosclerosis is a condition that involves deposits of fatty substances and cholesterol that form plaque in the inner linings of arteries.

Dr. Andrew Weil feels that a

higher percentage of fat is okay if it's the right kind of fat. Just like there is good cholesterol and bad cholesterol, there is good fat and bad fat. The good fat is monounsaturated oils and omega-3 fatty acids. Saturated fat is bad fat and hydrogenated oils (trans fats) is bad fat.

Dr. Ornish's Reversal Diet is vegetarian and consists mostly of complex carbohydrates. While it does not specifically restrict calories, it excludes foods high in saturated fat, caffeine and other stimulants, all oils and all animal products except nonfat milk and nonfat yogurt. The diet is high in fiber. It does allow alcohol consumption of less than two ounces a day, egg whites and moderate use of salt and sugar.

Those who follow that diet will take in 10 percent fat, most of which is unsaturated, 70 to 75 percent carbohydrates, 15 to 20 percent

protein and five milligrams of cholesterol daily.

Then there is the Mediterranean diet, which has its roots in the



Greek island of Crete. In a large study, Greeks from this island had the longest life expectancy and lowest death rate due to cardiovascular disease.

The Mediterranean diet consists of generous servings of fruits, vegetables, grains and cereals. Unlike the reversal diet, meat is okay in small amounts. It also includes moderate consumption of alcohol - especially wine, moderate consumption of milk and dairy products and high consumption of legumes such as peas and beans. As for fats, a high ratio of unsaturated fat to saturated fat is recommended.

LDL Cholesterol and triglycerides - keep them low HDL

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance that occurs naturally throughout your body. It's something your body needs to synthesize hormones and Vitamin D.

There are two types of cholesterol: high-density lipoproteins (HDL) and low density lipoproteins (LDL). Too much LDL or "bad" cholesterol causes plaque build up and blockage in your arteries. That in turn leads to the hardening of the arteries, known as atherosclerosis. And that leads to heart attacks. A lot of HDL or "good" cholesterol is desirable. High levels of HDL keep cholesterol from building up in the walls of your arteries.

You should keep your total cholesterol below 200 mg/dl, your LDL below 130 mg/dl and your HDL above 25 mg/dl. Total cholesterol levels between 200-239 mg/dl are considered borderline high and 240 and above is considered high. For LDL cholesterol, levels of 130-159 mg/dl are considered borderline high and 160 and above are considered high.

Triglycerides aren't as well known as cholesterol but, like cholesterol, they represent another type of fat found in the body. Elevated levels are a risk factor for heart disease. Levels above 250 mg/dl are considered to be high.

Weight, diet, exercise and alcohol intake, all of which can be modified through lifestyle changes, affect your levels of both. If you weigh too much, lose weight. Cut down on saturated fats in your food. Regular exercise may help lower LDL and raise HDL.

The same lifestyle changes, along with limiting sugar and alcohol, will also help lower triglycerides.

Triglycerides can only be measured after a 12-hour fast. If you don't know your cholesterol and triglycerides levels, and you subscribe to the State Health Plan, you can find out for just \$10. Testing for both of these levels are included in the State Health Plan's Preventive Worksite Screening Benefit. To participate in a screening, contact your benefits administrator or Prevention Partners coordinator.

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Avenues is produced three times a year
by the South Carolina Budget and Control
Board

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Women and heart disease

continued from page 1

breast tissue. The treadmill test is also adversely affected by breast tissue. Finally, the smaller blood vessels in women make the angiography more difficult to perform. An angiography, the primary test for heart disease, requires a tube be threaded through blood vessels.

Because diagnosis can be difficult, when heart disease does strike women, it tends to be far more deadlier. Early warning signs can be missed and CHD caught later in the process of the disease. Women are one and a half times more likely to die within a year of their first heart attack than men.

While this is a disturbing picture, there are some things women can do to reduce their risk for heart disease.

One of the best things women can do is really simple - walk. And the faster you walk, the better. One study shows that women who walk can reduce their risk for heart disease by an average of 40 percent. Walking briskly (3-4 mph) reduced the risk by 54 percent and slow walking reduced it by 32 percent.

The State Health Plan Prevention Partners has resources to help women, too. Because of the risk factors for heart disease, the most important thing is early detection. If you subscribe to the State Health Plan, the Preventive Worksite Screening benefit provides what you need and for only \$10! It covers all the risk factors through a blood draw and health risk appraisal as

well as height, weight and blood pressure measurements. You don't even have to meet you deductible to receive this valuable benefit.

If you have chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension (high blood pressure), Prevention Partners sponsors free chronic disease management workshops statewide to help you manage these conditions. A Healthy Heart workshop, which focuses on lipid reduction, is also available.

Preventive worksite screenings are held at worksites and on a regional basis. If you are interested in a worksite screening or a chronic disease management workshop, please contact your benefits administrator or Prevention Partners coordinator.

Risk factors for CHD and stroke are widespread

The incidence of risk factors for heart disease is all around you.

One in two Americans (about 98 million) have high cholesterol. One in four have high blood pressure. In South Carolina, that figure is even higher (almost 27 percent). About 142 million Americans are overweight. In addition, one in every 20 South Carolinians has diabetes. Two out of every three who have diabetes lose their lives through some form of heart or blood vessel disease. All of these conditions are bad enough by themselves, and all of them affect the health of your heart. Some of them even feed off each other. For instance, diabetics are 1.5 to two times more likely to have high blood pressure.

Lifestyle behaviors, such as smoking, a diet high in saturated fat and lack of exercise contribute to the risk of heart disease.

High blood pressure, smoking and diabetes are also risk factors for stroke. And people with heart disease are more than twice as likely to have a stroke, according to the American Heart Association. Other risk factors for stroke are high red blood cell count, heredity, gender, carotid artery disease, excessive alcohol and drug abuse.

Some risk factors are reversible through lifestyle changes and some are reversible with medication. Some can be reversed with a combination of both.

A study released last November at an American Heart Association meeting aimed to show that lifestyle changes can have a significant effect on reducing heart disease and stroke. Participants were guided through a 13-week regimen that consisted of disease management of blood pressure, blood sugar and lipids; group exercise,

yoga and other relaxation techniques; social support; cognitive behavior intervention; and home practice.

The drops in systolic blood pressure (10 percent), diastolic blood pressure (7 percent), total cholesterol (15 percent), LDL ("bad") cholesterol (21 percent) and triglycerides (nearly 12 percent) were significant. The study results indicated that medication did not account for the changes observed. What this means is that lifestyle change is what accounted for the positive results.

Two years ago, a Blue Cross Blue Shield affiliate in Pittsburgh implemented a program of aggressive lifestyle modification through the Dean Ornish program. The affiliate estimates cost saving per person of \$16,186 and that 80 percent of the participants would have required surgery within five years.

Lifestyle changes are important but medicine continues to play a crucial role. The University of Texas-Houston Taking Control of Your Health newsletter says certain blood pressure medications can not only improve blood pressure but also lower the death rate. Statins are valuable in lowering cholesterol. Statins are the newest class of cholesterol-reducing drugs. Other important tools are improved screening, gene therapy, treating plaque in the arteries and angiogenesis, which is the growing of new blood vessels to nourish the heart.

Last but not least is education. Through our free chronic disease management workshops, Prevention Partners has help available in the areas of hypertension, diabetes and Healthy Heart. And the State Health Plan's Preventive Worksite Screening benefit will identify your risk factors.

Prevention

1999 Awards for Excellence

Prevention Partners presented its annual Awards for Excellence last December during the Health at Work Conference at the State Museum in Columbia. Congratulations again to all the winners listed below.

Award for Excellence
Award for Participation
Award for Creativity
Award for Collaboration
Award for Health Promotion Planning
Outstanding Administrator

Outstanding Coordinator

Outstanding Committee Member

Agencies

Dept. of Health and Human Services
State Park Correctional Center
Arts Commission
DHEC Palmetto Health District
Northside Correctional Institution
Warden Ed McCrory
-Walden Correctional Institution
Patricia Golightly
-Northside Correctional Institution
Mary Teague
-Arts Commission

Schools/Colleges

Anderson School District 5
Gilbert Elementary School
USC Wellness Works
USC Aiken
Pineview Elementary School
Principal Don Ackerman
-Pineview Elementary School
Sabina Mosso
-Anna Boyd Child Dev. Center
Dawn Gressette
-Lower Richland High School

If you want to protect your heart and reduce your risk of stroke, you want to avoid high blood pressure. While some people need to take blood pressure medication, you can help lower your blood pressure through lifestyle changes:

- Lose weight;
- Reduce salt and sodium in your diet;
- Keep alcohol intake at moderate levels;
- Be physically active; and
- Participate in a worksite screening once a year.



Please use this order form to order Prevention Partners materials. Indicate in the box before each item how many you wish to order. All prices include sales tax. The following materials and programs are currently available:

☐ **Back on Track** - This back pain and injury prevention program consists of a participant manual, exercise videotape, dyna-band and instructions, and towel. Cost: \$10.50.

☐ **Tension Tamer** - Our Stress management program consists of a participant manual, relaxation cassette tape, computer-shaped stress ball and stress dot card. Cost: \$10.50.

☐ **Take Care of Yourself** - A 302-page soft-cover book on self-care and when to see the doctor. Cost: \$7.35.

☐ **Weight Management** - This three-CD set consists of Executive Diet Helper, Menu Planner and Weight Loss Planner. Cost: \$10.50.

☐ **Fast Food Guide** - Pocket-size guide with information on cholesterol, sodium and other important ingredient information from most major fast food chains. Cost: \$1.58.

Please make checks payable to the **Office of Insurance Services**. Sorry, no cash or purchase orders are accepted.

Name: _____

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